

Coco Fusco

The Empty Plaza / La Plaza Vacía

February 22 – March 31, 2012



Coco Fusco, *The Empty Plaza*, 2012, single-channel video

Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present New York-based artist Coco Fusco's first solo exhibition with the Gallery.

The cornerstone of the exhibition, *The Empty Plaza/La Plaza Vacía* is a single-channel video. Inspired by the organized public protests in the Middle East beginning in 2011, the artist took note of the communal spaces around the world being utilized and, in contrast, those left empty.

For Fusco's new work, the empty Plaza de la Revolución in Havana, Cuba becomes the protagonist in her meditation on public space, revolutionary promise, and memory. Intermittent close-range views bring the Plaza's architecture into focus; long takes documenting Fusco's passage through the vacant square are punctuated by vintage archival footage depicting scenes from Post-Revolutionary Cuba. Throughout the duration of the video, a Spanish narration, written by acclaimed Cuban journalist Yoani Sanchez, describes what appears—and does not appear—in view. Also on exhibit are film stills from *The Empty Plaza*. Cinematic in impact, the images are dominated by a broad horizon line as the large sky and the vast civic plaza are nearly equalized.

"The absence of public in some plazas seemed just as resonant and provocative as its presence in others," Fusco recalls. "Cuba's Plaza of the Revolution is one such place—a stark, inhospitable arena where all the major political events of the past half-century have been marked by mass choreography, militarized displays and rhetorical flourish. I decided to create a piece about that legendary site—an empty stage filled with memories, through which every foreigner visitor passes, while nowadays many, if not most, Cubans flee."

2012 marks the twentieth anniversary of Fusco's seminal collaborative performance work with Guillermo Gomez-Peña, *Couple in the Cage: Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* and its presentation in the legendary 1993 *Whitney Biennial*. Fusco revisits this important work through a series of new engravings, which are on view at the Gallery. Rendered in the style of Nineteenth-century caricatures, Fusco's recollections of audience responses to the *Amerindians* performance weave a humorous yet unsettling narrative, exposing the residue of colonial stereotypes in contemporary culture. While looking back, the new works underscore the long-lasting effects of Colonialism that remain prevalent in the contemporary art world, in spite of broad cultural progress since the early-1990s platforms of institutional-critique and multiculturalism.

Coco Fusco (b. 1960) is an interdisciplinary artist and writer. She has performed, lectured, exhibited and curated internationally since 1988. Her work combines electronic media and performance in a variety of formats, from staged multi-media performances incorporating large-scale projections and closed-circuit television to live streaming performances on the Internet that invite audiences to chart her course of action through online discussion.

Fusco received her B.A. in Semiotics from Brown University (1982), her M.A. in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford University (1985) and her Ph.D. in Art and Visual Culture from Middlesex University (2007). The artist is a recipient of a 2003 Herb Alpert Award in the Arts. Her performances and videos have been included in two Whitney Biennials (2008 and 1993), the *Mercosul Biennial* (2011), the *Sydney Biennale* (1992), the *Johannesburg Biennial* (1997), the *Shanghai Biennale* (2004), *InSite 05, Transmediale* (2003), *VideoBrasil* (2006) and *Performa05*. Her work was recently featured in *Afro-Modern: Journeys through the Black Atlantic* at the Tate Liverpool (2010) and *Self as Disappearance* at the Centre d'Art Contemporain La Synagogue de Delme in France (2010), among others. She is an Associate Professor and Director of Intermedia Initiatives at Parsons The New School for Design in New York, NY.